

A) to the call identifiers in the database, and if the further call identifier matches one of the call identifiers in the database, attempts to connect the calling party to a specific one of the agents in the telephonic service provider facility with whom the calling party has been associated in the database.

--17. (new) The system of claim 16, further comprising a registrar that, in the database, associates a specific one of the calling parties with a specific one of the agents before the specific one of the calling parties has been served by any of the agents.

--18. (new) The system of claim 17, wherein the registrar, also in the database, associates a specific one of the calling parties with a specific one of the agents that has served the specific one of the calling parties.--

REMARKS

The abstract has been replaced with a new abstract with fewer than 150 words.

The original claims have been canceled and replaced with new claims 13-18 that are believed to be proper as to form.

The original claims were rejected as anticipated by LEE 5,537,470 or as unpatentable over LEE in view of SAITO et al. 5,329,523. The new claims avoid these rejections and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The new claims are directed to a method and system for

automatically distributing calls from calling parties to agents in a telephonic service provider facility, in which a database associates specific calling parties with specific agents. A call identifier of a calling party is compared to call identifiers in the database and the calling party is connected to the agent with whom the calling party has been associated in the database if the call identifier matches one of the call identifiers in the database. If the call identifier of the calling party does not match one of the call identifiers in the database, a voice message is provided to the calling party to urge the calling party to provide a further call identifier, which is then compared to the call identifiers in the database. If the further call identifier matches one of the call identifiers in the database, the calling party is connected to the agent with whom the calling party has been associated in the database. Support for the new claims is found, for example, at page 12, lines 1-12 and page 16, lines 2-11.

Neither LEE nor SAITO et al. discloses or suggests the method and system where, if the call identifier of the calling party is not matched to one of the call identifiers in the database, a voice message is provided to the calling party urging the calling party to provide a further call identifier, the further call identifier is compared to the call identifiers in the database, and if the further call identifier matches one of the call identifiers in the database, the calling party is

connected to a specific one of the agents in the telephonic service provider facility with whom the calling party has been associated in the database.

LEE addresses the problem where a calling party is disconnected and calls back immediately. LEE temporarily stores call identifiers of calling parties in a database and reconnects those calling parties with the agents who served them, based on recognition of the call identifier, if the calling party calls again within a predetermined time period. LEE does not provide a voice message urging the unidentified caller to provide a call identifier. Indeed, since LEE envisions only temporary storage of call identifiers, only the most recent calling parties would be in the database and asking each unidentified calling party for a call identifier would be a time-consuming exercise with little chance of success. Further, since the calling party is probably using the same instrument to make the second call, and since the instrument provided the call identifier in the first call, there is a reasonable assurance that the instrument will provide the call identifier again in the second call. SAITO et al. relates to sequential assignment of agents and is not relevant to the above-noted feature.

Accordingly, the new claims avoid the rejections of record.

New claims 14 and 17 provide that the database includes specific ones of the calling parties that are associated with

specific ones of the agents before the specific one of the calling parties has been served by any of the agents (page 21, line 13, through page 22, line 21.)

The references do not disclose or suggest associating a specific one of the calling parties with a specific one of the agents before the specific one of the calling parties has been served by any of the agents and thus these claims also avoid the rejections of record.

In view of the present amendment and the foregoing remarks, it is believed that the present application has been placed in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

YOUNG & THOMPSON

By Benoit Castel
Reg. No. 35,041 for
Thomas W. Perkins
Attorney for Applicant
Registration No. 33,027
745 South 23rd Street
Arlington, VA 22202
Telephone: 703/521-2297

June 30, 2003